

Lecture Notes in Social Networks

Iyad Muhsen AlDajani

Internet Communication Technology (ICT) for Reconciliation

Applied Phronesis Netnography in
Internet Research Methodologies

 Springer

Lecture Notes in Social Networks

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Research Methodologies



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Abbreviations

CAQCAS	Computer Assistant Qualitative Content Analysis Software
E-Democracy	Electronic Democracy
E-Government	Electronic Government
E-Service	Electronic Services
HoF	Hear of Flesh Not Stone Project
ICT	Internet communication technology
ICT-MR	Internet communication technology for the advancement of moderation, reconciliation, and democracy research
ICT for reconciliation	Internet communication technology for reconciliation
IRW	Interactive Reconciliation Workshops
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OIRA	Online Interactive Reconciliation Articles
PMMN	Phonetic Mixed-Method Netnography approach
PhMM	Phonetic Mixed-Method Tradition
QLCA	Qualitative Content Analysis
QNCA	Quantitative Content Analysis
QD	Qualitative Descriptions
QDS	Qualitative Data Structure
WASATIA NGO	Non-governmental organization in Palestine
Wasatia	Moderation as an Islamic concept

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Part I
Internet Communication
Research Overview

Chapter 1

Internet Communication Research

Overview



1.1 Preface

This study is an interdisciplinary research that applies Phronesis in Social Sciences illustrated in Internet research methodologies in an experimental intervention research design to investigate the impact of the usage of internet communication technologies on the reconciliation process, applied in a case study in the Palestinian –Israeli context.

The research is part of the trilateral project “Heart of Flesh Not Stone,” financed by the German Science Foundation, Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG). It involves Friedrich-Schiller University, presented by Martin Leiner, Director of the Jena Center for Reconciliation Studies (JCRS), Nikolaus Knoepffler, and assisted by Martin O’Malley from the Ethics Centre; the University of Tel-Aviv presented by Ari Nadler; the University of Ben-Gurion, presented by Shifra Sagy; and Wasatia in Palestine, presented by Mohammed Dajani Daoudi.

The research develops a scientific approach to conduct a scientific investigation and develop a research methodology on whether internet communication technologies can instigate social change towards the reconciliation process in the midst of a protracted conflict. It includes the integration of disciplines such as philosophy, sociology, religion, ethics, political science, communication science, and internet information technologies. It explores the hypothesis that Internet Communication Technology (ICT) can promote social change toward moderation, reconciliation, and democracy in the midst of conflict; thus to be referred to as the Reconciliation Process in the research.

Invigorating that the reconciliation process is much needed to generate social change in the stagnant peace process between Israelis and Palestinians, engaged in a violent conflict for more than seven decades. It requires sincere efforts to overcome social prejudices, the clash of narratives, feelings of victimhood, denial of rights, and historical attachments of the other, that keep perpetuating the conflict.

The research illustrates the intrinsic value of adhering to a culture of moderation, reconciliation, and the advancement of democracy in the middle of the conflict. The reconciliation process is an essential requirement to achieve a just and lasting settlement in combining the present ‘Top-down approach’ with the ‘bottom-up approach’ using the new expanding social communications technologies of the internet to push for social change toward reconciliation process. It is done by using digital social networks as a tool to lay the foundation for creating the environment conducive for moderation, reconciliation, and democracy, to commit both communities in conflict to adopt the reconciliation process.

The Reconciliation process is more achievable when the bottom-up approach affiliated with stakeholders convince the political leadership that this is what the people want; and that they should adopt a reconciliation agenda to respond positively to what the people demand. In this way, deliberative democracy is in progress where instead of people voting to express their voices, they are debating out loudly for politicians to hear them. ICT can help to build trust and put an end to dehumanization, delegitimization, and stereotyping of others and to usher mutual recognition and respect for the narrative of the other and acceptance for their aspirations, interests, and attachments with their history.

The communication research demonstrates that using the online digital social network as a tool to spread moderation, reconciliation, and democratic values which are vital to initiating the process of reconciliation. Utilizing online social networks as a tool to spread peaceful concepts within both communities helps to prepare them to reconcile by breaking the psychological barrier of hatred between them.

The conclusion offers a proper orientation and comprehensive knowledge of the theoretical framework of the research utilizing theories and concepts helpful to understand the reconciliation process. Such theories and concepts include the “*Hölderlin Perspective*,” referencing the German poet Friedrich Hölderlin (1770–1843) for (Leiner and Flämig 2012, p. 16), which reveals that reconciliation can be present in the middle of the conflict. Another is the Aristotelian concept “*Phronesis*” in Applied Phronetic Social Science as used in internet communication technology for social transformation, those theories are the theoretical foundation of the research.

The research implements a new method to develop an internet research methodology by utilizing the Internet communication technologies applied in phronetic social science, to expose social change in the middle of conflicts. Moreover develops the phenomenology of Internet Communication Technology in Applied Phronetic Social Science, which can be adopted as an internet research methodology for other internet research, described more in detail in Chap. 2. In Chap. 3, the communication research researches reconciliation in the middle of conflict, methods, practices, and strategies by using ICT in different aspects. In Chap. 4, the research introduced how ICT is considered a haven for social, cultural, and economic transformational change.

In Chap. 5, communication research introduces the Wasatia movement in Palestine as an agent for social change. The case study in this research is the non-governmental non-political Palestinian organization “*Wasatia*” established in

Palestine in January 2007 by Mohammad Dajani Daoudi.¹ The research focuses on how this movement is using Internet Communication Technologies and the social networks to expand its Reconciliation Process to compensate for its lack of funds to promote its moderation values. It has become an essential agent for social transformation advancing the moderation process in the middle of conflict for that purpose.

The study explores the Wasatia Circle by Dajani Daoudi in several of his publications and how It can be exploited and understood using social media and illustrate it within the expansion of big-data. The study describes how to develop a cycle of change using the evolvement of the Wasatia Circle into a Wasatia Cycle using ICT, paving the way for the reconciliation process and thus ushering in conflict resolution and reconciliation processes. Thus this approach is described in more detail in Chap. 5. The study explores online deliberative democracy using online social networks and ICT applications, to within the impact of an online deliberative democracy dispute, this approach is more introduced and explored in Chap. 6.

The research applies “*Netnography*” approach to developing the analytics for the research, which was introduced by Kozinets (2015) and explored in Chap. 7. In addition to ethical conduct in Internet research to be considered, accredit to the association of internet researchers (AOIR) standards in research which is introduced in the chapter. For analyzing and interpreting the analytics, qualitative content analysis methodologies are introduced depending on methods introduced by Krippendorff, which are more described in Chap. 8. The empirical work for qualitative content analysis the combines the methods with the procedures are demonstrated in an analytical form on the bases of theories and methods of Krippendorff and other experts in the field of qualitative content analysis, they are illustrated in Chap. 9.

The study explores, collects, analyzes, investigates, interprets the behaviors and engagements of participants in online social media and their influence towards social change in the public and community providers, who affects and is affected by a problem of concern within the community. It studies the influence of Internet communication technologies, such as online social networks, for developing an ego-centered social network that evolves to adopt in its core the values of moderation, reconciliation, and democracy as part of the Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation process. It also evaluated the effects of a change of intentionality from hatred and animosity toward more acceptance and change.

The study helps to understand ICT applications as a tool for the advancement toward moderation in Islam, as a tool for reconciliation and online deliberative democracy. The main finding is that ICT is proving to be a useful analytic tool for measuring and examining the advancement of the community towards the Reconciliation Process; also, for researching the potential of online deliberative democracy ingrained in digital social networks in the online community that can develop social change towards the reconciliation process. The findings and results affirm that ICT can foster and bridge the reconciliation process in communications

¹ Mohammed Dajani Daoudi, is the founder of the Wasatia movement in Palestine, also a founder and former director of the American Studies at Alquds University.

between communities in conflict and has the potential to build bridges of understanding between foes as well as partners in peace and to establish peaceful and cooperative relations. Also, ICT can influence social, cultural, and economic transformational change.

The innovation in this research is the creativity in developing internet research methodologies to research the internet and how to analyze “Big-Data”; data develops from the use of the online application for internet researchers. This kind of innovation is new and is still under development. The study introduced a theoretical synthesis to be adopted as a discourse to conduct internet research. The synthesis is extracted from applying Phronetic social science in mixed-method experimental intervention design applied in a Netnography approach and examined by qualitative content analysis methods and procedures.

The empirical work illustrates that it made social change in the online social media; the percentage is quite significant; the social change illustrates that the participants can adapt to change in the middle of the conflict. The perspective to involve participants actively in the research and bringing about change for individuals or communities using internet communication technology is a new tool, and it must be used.

ICT is part of the global human interaction that may help expose ethical virtues, such as trust, empathy, moderation, reconciliation, democracy, coexistence, and it is time to develop online social networks that encourage those virtues in developed countries. The communication research adheres to a standard of academic research methodology design, the theoretical framework was adapted from integrating theories researched and explored by different professors in the field of qualitative data analysis, the empirical work is new and innovative, and this kind of research is still evolving in all disciplines, as the study is an interdisciplinary research.

Today the internet is used as a tool for all kinds of research; this research can be a reference resource for other doctoral students in the field of qualitative data analysis and Internet research methodologies.

Here are some advantages of using Internet research as a tool in applying academic research:

1. The researcher can explore different studies from different academic fields that are related to his own field of inquiry.
2. Data collection is enormous, as the Internet generates datasets of hundreds of thousands of data that can be collected in different academic methods.
3. The Internet is a sustainable system; it can also be easy to research specific phenomena of a wide spectrum of participants.
4. Internet research is ultra-dynamic; data keeps changing according to social environments that support the evolution of the datasets.
5. No bridges or boundaries, open space for all participants to interact, and no distinctions between participants, but it also can be restricted as required by the researcher.

1.2 Definition of Terms and Concepts

Big-Data All datasets evolved from conducting the research, including the online social network datasets and online materials such as images, videos, posts, articles that are included in the social website (www.wasatia.info) and the Facebook Groups (Wasatia.info & Wasatia Vision) and all kind of observations and behavioral conducted by online participants in the research.

Mixed-Method Research Design This is a research design defined by Creswell “*as a methodology, it involves philosophical norms that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases in the research process*” (Creswell 2014, p. 244).

Netnography This term refers to a study conducted on an online community. According to Kozinets (2015),

it is a name given to a specific set of related data collection, analysis, ethical representation research practice, where a significant amount of data collected and participant-observational research conducted originates in and manifested through that data shared freely on the Internet, including mobile applications. (Kozinets 2015, p. 79)

Phronetic Social Science This refers to the philosophical framework developed by Bent Flyvbjerg (2001). It is used to develop a Phronetic social practice that progresses a discourse for researching better practice and practical wisdom of outcomes. It is derived from what Aristotle highlighted as ‘*Phronesis*,’ which is the ability to make well-informed judgments in the specific and often original context (Ess and Jones 2004).

Phronetic Mixed-Method Netnography Approach A discourse of analysis by applying Complex Mixed-Method Experimental Intervention Design and applying the Netnography approach for analysis by applying qualitative content analysis, this approach is in more detail in Chap. 7.

Practice Theory Refers to a new method to research the practice of human conduct, especially the influence of taken-for-granted assumptions (Ritzer 2008); the significant theorists that contributed to this theory are Grafinkel, Bourdieu, Giddens, and Foucault. Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice can be identified as a Grand Theory that illustrates the conduct and behaviors of human nature (Walther 2014, p. 1). A Grand Theory is an “*abstract and normative theory of human nature and conduct*” (Skinner 1985, p. 1).

Qualitative Content Analysis According to Krippendorff (2013), the qualitative content analysis is an “*analysis of the manifest and latent content of a body of communicated materials through classifications, tabulations, and evaluation of its keys symbols and themes to ascertain its meaning and probable effect*” (p. 1).

Reconciliation Process In the context of this research, the process is referring to advancement for social change towards moderation, reconciliation, and democracy in the middle of conflict by the use of ICTs for that purpose.

Theoretical Synthesis These are theories that are outside sociology and brought into sociological theory; this type involves a wide range of theories from two or more theories, which involves structural functionalism and symbolic interactionism (Ritzer 2008, p. 72).

Wasatia NGO A Non-Governmental Organization in Palestine, working to expose moderation from a political-religious perspective, in Palestine. The word “*Wasatia*” refers to Moderation in the Arabic Language.

Wasatia Cycle The correlation developed from the influence of ICTs on the Wasatia Circle explored in Chap. 5. They cycle illustrate a Phronetic approach towards applying social change more for moderation, reconciliation, and democracy towards a cycle of transition, explored in detail in Chap. 5.

The social networks are rapidly becoming an indispensable part of the everyday lives of a majority of people around the globe. People perform various political, social, economic, and religious activities on the Internet and the so-called online social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, You-Tube. The research presents an overview of the empirical study evaluating the impact of social networks and online forums on adherence to the reconciliation process in the middle of the conflict.

The Reconciliation process is related to ethical values such as peace, truth, justice, love, trust, empathy, and the investigation of the moral issues in practices that dignify the process toward social change towards moderation, reconciliation, and democracy. Therefore, the communication research is concerned with the analysis of particular moral issues in private and public spectrum, using Internet communication technologies for that purpose. Therefore, we can consider that the reconciliation process is part of applied ethics, combining the use of the datasets generated from offline & online interactions to explore, collect, code, analyze and interpret the social change from utilizing ICT in exposing the reconciliation process. As part of the state of the art, I signify this scientific method as **Applied Ethics in Big Data**.

The Reconciliation Process is essential for social change that inhibits the peaceful development relations between entities in prolonged conflicts. Social change requires enormous efforts to overcome the lack of charismatic leadership, religious bigotry, backward cultural habits, and dire economic conditions, in a protracted conflict; all of these are insurmountable obstacles perpetuating the conflict. Consequently, the research studies how to overcome present obstacles with a stagnated conflict and pave the way towards reconciliation.

1.2.1 *The Communication Research*

The research develops an interdisciplinary scientific approach to study whether internet communication technology (ICT) can initiate social change to impact the reconciliation process in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. It combines different disciplines such as philosophy, sociology, religion, political science, communication science, information internet technologies, and information sciences. Therefore, the research explores the hypothesis that Internet Communication Technology (ICT) can advance social change toward moderation, reconciliation, peace, and democracy in the midst of a protracted conflict. The research also aims to bring a better understanding of ICT as a tool for the advancement toward Reconciliation Process in the Palestinian community. It investigates how to create a culture of moderation, reconciliation, and democracy starting bottom-up approach by using the new advancement in social communication networks to push social change toward a reconciliation process. It argues that using digital social networks as a tool would bring better understanding and more empathy for the human factor to help commit the two nations that are in conflict with the reconciliation process, developing a culture of peace.

The research utilizes different theoretical approaches, such as the Applied Phronetic Social Science. It introduces different concepts to advance to the reconciliation process using ICT. One such concept is the “*Hölderlin Perspective*” accredited to Leiner (Leiner and Flämig 2012, p. 16). Another is the Aristotelian concept “*Phronesis*” in Applied Phronetic Social Science for Flyvbjerg, Landman, and Schram. It introduces the phenomenology of Internet Communication Technology in applied Phronetic Social Science as a methodology for internet communication research. The study also introduces the religious “Wasatia” moderation concept developed by Dajani Daoudi (Barakat 2017).² This research describes the evolution of the “Wasatia” Circle³ of moderation to reconciliation to democracy by using internet communication technology and develops the “Wasatia Cycle,” that would evolve the community to social change towards the reconciliation process.

As for the methodological aspects, the communication research constructed theoretical synthesis by integrating several types methodological traditions, which are the Mixed-Method Experimental Intervention Research Design for Creswell and Clark, (Creswell and Plano Clark 2018), and “*Netnography*” as introduced by Kozinets (2015) and deploying the Qualitative Content Analysis methodologies as conducted by Krippendorff and other experts in the field of qualitative content analysis, to explore, collect, analyze, interpret and investigate the analytics. The empirical work was conducted on the non-governmental organization called “*Wasatia*” established in Palestine in 2007. It explores how Wasatia utilizes the online social networks in advancing the cause of reconciliation in the midst of conflict through

²Barakat, Z. (2017). *From Heart of Stone to Heart of Flesh: Evolutionary Journey from Extremism to Moderation*. München: Herbert Utz Verlag GmbH.

³Wasatia: A term used to identify Moderation in Islamic theology.

the promotion of moderation to affect social change using internet communication technologies. It researches how Wasatia uses the Internet technology systems, such as Facebook and its online social network, to compensate for its shortage of funds in calling upon both people to adopt its core values of moderation, reconciliation, and peace to put an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In conclusion, communication research explores some concepts and methodologies for a more comprehensive approach to online ICTs for social transformation and social change. It includes procedures for the analysis of analytics of online social networks and investigates different results from the use of analytics.

So far, the reconciliation process was conducted through a top-bottom approach of political leaders reluctant to make the sacrifices needed to reach a peace agreement between the two communities involved in the conflict. It concludes that peace is more achievable, adopting a bottom-up approach than a top-bottom traditional political leadership approach, with the use of ICTs for this purpose.

The current study reached significant results and improved several concepts to be adopted, that are of high importance for social change in the middle of the conflict. First, the online social networks do have the potential to promote mutual trust, mutual recognition, acknowledgment, economic, political relations, and respect for the sensitivity and consideration of the other and of the enemy. Second, moderation, reconciliation, and democracy are essential elements vital for peacebuilding where uninhabited digital social media can play a significant role in paving the way for the reconciliation process. Third, utilizing online social networks is a powerful tool to spread the culture of moderation, reconciliation, and democracy in a community suffering from protracted conflict to a community willing to reconcile using the bottom-up approach. Forth, ICT can play a significant role in online deliberative democracy as a useful analytic tool for promoting the advancement of the community towards the reconciliation process within the use of ICTs.

Several concepts were introduced as a result of conducting the communication research, such as the phenomenology of ICT in applied Phronetic social science, ICT can be a tool for social transformation, the transformation of Wasatia Circle into the Wasatia Cycle by the use of ICTs to empower social change. This communication research introduces the applications of ICTs in exposing and implementing online deliberative democracy. In addition to other concepts, such as moderation (Dajani 2009), ICT for the development of cultural, social, and economic capital (Bekerman and Horenszyk 2009; Brantmeier 2009; Lenhardt and Nichol森 1990); deliberative democracy (Elster 1998; Gutmann and Thompson 2004), and deliberative polling (Fishkin and Habermas 1995; Luskin 2003). Furthermore, the theories of deliberative democracy and online deliberative democracy are used to explain how the social networks became the outlet for people to express their views freely, including other theories that advance the methods for internet research.

The following practiced methods were applied: netnography for studying communities online (Basset and O'Riordan 2002; Kozinets 2015), qualitative content analysis methods for qualitative data analysis with NVivo (Bazeley and Jackson 2013; Kohlbacher 2012; Penna 2013; Saldana 2013a, b; Sandelowski 2000; Schreier 2012; Schulz 2012), and methods for qualitative content analysis (Krippendorff 2013). The research aimed to explore and inquire data by applying qualitative